

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 26, 2003

The Honorable Ann M. Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 200A
Washington, DC 20250-0003

Dear Madame Secretary:

We are writing to urge your approval of two applications for new Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC & Ds) in Oregon: the Eagle Cap and Southeast Oregon areas. It is our understanding that these applications were accepted by USDA for consideration this fiscal year and are awaiting final approval.

As you know, RC & Ds are community-driven "bootstrap" organizations that help rural areas succeed by finding solutions and focusing resources from inside and outside the region. They are also successful in leveraging conservation and rural development funds. Oregon RC & Ds, on average, leverage about ten dollars for every one given to them by the USDA.

There is strong support for completing the RC & D coverage of Oregon. The Eagle Cap and Southeastern Oregon areas are primarily agricultural, and face difficult environmental and water challenges that, if not addressed quickly, may escalate in complexity and expense. Instituting these two new RC & Ds could significantly help these areas.

We hope that you will approve the applications for the Eagle Cap and Southeast Oregon RC & Ds. Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of any assistance to you.

Sincerely,



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate



Greg Walden
United States Congress



Ron Wyden
United States Senate